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November 5, 1952

~~MEMORANDUM~~

To: Admiral Kirk  
From: George A. Morgan  
Subject: Soviet Communist Outlook and the XIX Party Congress

The question as to what shift, if any, is taking place in communist strategy and tactics is so widely debated, and so important for FBI, that there has been considerable discussion of it in our staff. A National Estimate bearing on this subject is expected soon. Meanwhile here are some provisional impressions based chiefly on Stalin's speech and article and Malenkov's report for the Central Committee:

1. The most fundamental point made by Stalin is that capitalism has entered a phase of its "general crisis" in which growth no longer exceeds decay and "relative stability," which he acknowledged in 1929, is no longer valid. This implies an indefinitely continued prospect of communist gains, not an interlude of "peaceful coexistence" and revolutionary stalemate.

2. While a real possibility is held out that world war may be "prevented," the alleged reasons are grim rather than hopeful for us: the increased relative strength of the communist camp, the influence of "peace partisans," the prospect of economic crisis and serious inter-capitalist conflicts - notably trouble with Germany and Japan. There is no statement or implication that tension between the camps will decline; on the contrary, the war "threat" from the United States to the socialist camp is said to be growing. Malenkov's remark that prevention of world war would be a huge victory for the socialist camp makes plain enough that such "prevention" consists of preventive revolution.

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3. Stalin's speech is the most open pledge of Soviet support for world revolution that he has made since the 1920's, and the only one since he became head of the Soviet Government. Also it revives the orthodox language of Leninist class warfare to an extent that he has not even approached but once since before the war: in his greetings to Moscow in September 1947 (the year when the Cominform was launched and the big French strikes attempted). Togliatti used similar orthodox language in his October 17 speech (Pravda, October 20), thus confirming that the change is immediately applicable in current tactics.

4. Thus the trend appears to be toward a "harder" party line, not a softer one which veils revolutionary intent more deeply as at the time of the Popular Front. Some continued veiling through national and peace fronts is of course retained. Communists welcome bourgeois fellow-travellers at any time before the final seizure of power. The question needed to clarify much of the current loose talk about "popular front" or "united front" tactics is, how much are the commies (a) offering, (b) paying, for (c) what kinds of bourgeois collaboration? It is no novelty that they welcome any collaboration directed against the system of U.S. alliances. Nor do the documents here discussed contain any new offers. On the contrary, they imply generally improving prospects for the Party, hence declining prices for fellow-travellers.

5. The shift of attention from war to revolution is by no means radical: continued military strengthening is called for, and Soviet scientists are ordered to capture first place in the world - an ominous echo of what is reported elsewhere on Soviet technological advances. But to the extent that there is a moderate shift it seems to say: the American drive since 1950 to build arms and alliances has been so delayed and is now so threatened with economic and political backlash from the original spurt that the USSR now has a fair chance of retaining military superiority while moving ahead on the piecemeal revolutionary conquest of the world.

cc: Messers Taylor, Sherman,  
Craig, Brown, Johnson

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